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the high passes of the Caucasian Alps represent the first attempt at turning sanctuaries into churches of Our Lord —the first architectural attempts at the reconstruction of *Mairemni* into buildings more suitable for Christian worship. From these crude experiments there grew and developed those Svanian *basilicas*, the best examples of which are the Churches of the Prophet John in Enashi and of the Archangel Michael in Pkhotreri.

The Svanian *basilicas* are not, strictly speaking, very ingenious either in their form or in their detail; even the altar-sections—which together with the south walls are, in Georgian churches, usually most distinguished by luxurious decorations—are unattractive and unassuming. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of the Church of the Virgin at Zhibiani; the Church of Christ near Chubiani; the Church of the Transfiguration at Nemskhvira; the Church of the Archangel Michael at Matskhvarishi and the Church at Pkhotreri.

Ornamentation in Svanian churches generally consists of flat pilasters separated from each other by small and narrow arches as in the Church of the Virgin at Zhibiani. These pilasters have not developed capitals and their decoration is confined to shallow gashes with crude ornamentation carved in zig-zag shape.

Finer and more architecturally artistic are the columned arches which are found on the western and eastern walls of the Church of St. Barbara at Khé, of the Archangels at Matskhvarishi; on the western side of the Enashi Church and of the church at Tenali in Dadianis-Svaneti. This method is, no doubt, copied from Kutais Cathedral and was fashionable in the Byzantine west and in Russian churches of the Vladimir-Suzdal type.

The peculiar genius of the Georgians in the metallurgical arts and in enamel work has already received some recognition in Western Europe. The writings of Kondakov have made known to Western students the treasures of the monasteries and churches of Georgia and Svaneti, and examples of the work of the mediæval Georgian smiths and enamellers have found their way into European and American Museums.[1] The best known examples of the Georgian metal-smith's work are the three principal icons preserved at Gelati; a twelfth-

[1] The gold and enamel reliquary of Queen Katévani described by O. M. Dalton in *Recueil d'études dédiées à la mémoire de P. Kondakov*; the Georgian gold and enamel objects in the Svenigorodskoi Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, including plaques from the twelfth-century icon of Jumati.

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[Medieval Georgia]

century Christ, and a Virgin attributed by Kondakov to the tenth century, at the monastery of Khopi in Mingrelia, and another Virgin dating from the eleventh or twelfth century; a Christ of the twelfth century decorated with contemporary enamels from the Mingrelian monastery at Kezkheri; and the tenth-century Hodigitria at Martvili. The most celebrated of the Gelati icons is the Virgin of Kakhuli, so called since it belonged originally to the monastery of Kakhuli in the Chorokhi country whence it was removed during the Turkish wars of the sixteenth century. The Kakhuli icon is a large gold triptych into which are set no less than ninety-four enamels, of which seventy are of Byzantine and the others of Georgian provenance. The icon itself is attributed to the second quarter of the twelfth century, but many of the enamels are of older date; namely the plaque of Christ crowning the Emperor Michael VII and his wife Maria of Alania,[1] and the two crosses bearing inscriptions in honour of King Kwiriké of Abkhazeti. Diehl compares the Khakhuli icon as a technical masterpiece to the Pala d'Oro of St. Mark's; and Kondakov states that

> "the enamels are notable for precision of design and for the brightness of their colours, in which sky-blue and turquoise blue, tones of violet and purple, and delicate shades of flesh are notable; you see there a self-confidence, a mastery and delicacy in the execution of detail which are only possible when art, having emerged from the period of experiment and uncertainty, has already evolved a set of forms and a perfectly developed ornamentation".[2]

Less known than the Mingrelian icons are those found in Svaneti, many of which have been published by Countess Uvarov.[3] In the Svanian churches are some of the finest survivals of Georgian and Byzantine metallurgical iconography from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, such as the Christ of Zhibiani, the Archangel Gabriel of Lagani and the Archangels Gabriel and Michael of Chukhuli, for the earlier period, and the magnificent Christ of Lagani and the Mother of God of Chukhuli for the fifteenth century.

Icons derive from the portraits of mummies of Hellenistic Egypt executed in *tempera* on wooden panels, first coated with *gesso*, which were laid on the coffins. From the fourth century they began to have a great vogue in the Byzantine

[1] Maria of Alania—or of Abasgia (Abkhazeti). For the discussion of the identity of the Byzantine Empress Maria of Alania see Brosset, who suggests that she was probably no other than Martha, daughter of Bagrat IV (*H. de la G.*, p. 330, note 2).

[2] Kondakov, *Essaev*, p. 126.

[3] Uvarov, *Mat. Kav.*, Vol. X.

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world, and the adoration which the icons aroused among the masses of the population led to the great "iconoclastic" struggle within the Empire. With the triumph of the Iconophils in the ninth century, there was a great revival in the fashion, and icons of every class were produced, from the painted wooden panels of the poor to the exquisite achievements of the jeweller's art which decorated the palaces of the great.

The icon was essentially an artistic medium of the Byzantine mind and the Georgians undoubtedly adopted from the Byzantines the cult and the art of the icon. Georgian painted icons are never of first quality, although they early achieved a certain humanism which is lacking in Byzantine and contemporary painting, and which is exemplified both in some of the Gelati icons and in the frescoes at Nekresi in Kakheti. Georgian goldsmiths work is, however, the equal of any that came from the workshops of Byzantium—where indeed many Georgians were employed—and Georgian enamel work is little, if at all, inferior to Byzantine work. The metallurgical arts—which had such a high development in the Middle Ages—seem to have attracted the genius of the Georgians, and they attained a degree of technical perfection which compares with that of Byzantium and Italy, and elevates them far above the contemporary workers in metallurgy in Eastern Europe, Russia and Armenia. The chief difference between Georgian and Byzantine metallurgical iconography is to be found in the non-representational character of the Georgian work. Byzantine icons generally have a plain background, although they may have an embossed frame-like border; the background of Georgian icons is entirely filled by complicated designs, similar in character to the elaborate sculptured designs of Georgian churches. These backgrounds constitute the very special beauty of Georgian icons, and the combination of this non-representational and geometric art with the essential elements of East Christian artistic technique represents a Georgian synthesis of Western and Eastern conceptions.

Georgian enamels are rather coarse in drawing and less accurate in finish than the Byzantine examples. The *cloisons* are more distinct and less neat, and the colour-schemes are less delicate in tone, although the Georgian enamellers achieved the eight colours of the Byzantines. The Georgians excelled particularly in the manufacture of elaborate geometrical plaques, and here they surpassed the Byzantine workers, the

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development of whose process was always limited by their tendency to adhere to representational designs.

By the fourteenth century the Georgian icon had already begun to deteriorate, and by the end of the sixteenth century it has lost all artistic value. The influence of Capuchin monks had introduced a certain element of the Italianate, and the icons of this period, as for instance the Virgin of Kavtis-Khevi, were becoming thoroughly bastardized.

The church plate of the time of the mediæval Georgian Kingdom illustrates further both the skill of Georgian craftsmen and the wealth of the Georgian nobles. Byzantine influence was strong, and the finest example of all which survives, the enamelled gold cross in the Svanian church of Matskhvarishi, is attributed by Countess Uvarov to Byzantine workmanship of the twelfth century. Georgian workmanship in reliquaries, cups, plate and crosses was, however, exceedingly fine, and in many pieces, as in the large gold and enamel *bazarpeshni* or drinking spoons (a purely Georgian fashion), the Georgian craftsmen evolved their own interpretation of both Byzantine and Persian decorative motives.

The few of the Georgian bronze church-gates which survive show exquisite workmanship, and like the stone-sculptures and the carved wooden gates which are preserved at Mghvimé Monastery, in the Svanian churches, and in the Tiflis Museum, they are essentially of local inspiration, a Georgian combination of the national decorative designs—such as the interlaced—with Persian and Byzantine elements introduced.

Byzantium, before all, was a civilization; secondly, a political Empire. And until the fifteenth century the civilization of the Near Eastern lands was in essentials Byzantine. East Christian art was the expression of the Byzantine mind—a stone the facets of which reflected different lights according to whether the eyes cast upon it were Bulgarian or Armenian, Rumanian or Georgian, Serbian or Russian.

The Byzantines were the creators of painting as a living art, and their pupils were Italy in great degree, the Russian Masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the provincial schools of Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania (which though limited in many ways were not without merit), and the Armenians and Georgians. The Balkan schools, in the last decade, have come in for their meed of appreciation from European students, and the material for Greek and Balkan iconography is plentiful. But the Armenian and

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

In describing the customs of the Georgian Highlanders and the Georgians in general pertaining to the protection of women and children against the aggression of evil spirits, we found that iron is regarded by them as possessed with special magical power. Not only iron as a metal, but also the profession connected with it, as that of a blacksmith, is viewed by the people as supernatural and endowed with magical power. This is clearly seen in the beliefs of the Georgians of Samurzagan.[38]

Not only iron as a metal, but also the blacksmith's trade, all objects associated with it, and the person of the blacksmith himself are regarded by the people as endowed with supernatural or magical powers. The people look with reverence and fear on the blacksmith's anvil. They expect from it the healing of the sick and help in all kinds of difficulties of their earthly life. They take the oath upon the anvil and are convinced that the oath-breaker will be severely punished with some kind of misfortune. Believing in the supernatural power of the anvil, they offer to it numerous gifts, consisting of goats, oxen, and money. Some do this out of gratitude, others from fear. One suspected of theft or a debtor refusing to meet his obligations is compelled to take the oath on the anvil in order to clear himself of suspicion.

Like the blacksmith's anvil, the person of the blacksmith also is held in high esteem by the people. The blacksmith is regarded as a diviner and sorcerer. If someone is ill he sends one of his relatives or friends to the blacksmith for help and to find out the cause of the illness. The blacksmith either satisfies the petitioner himself or announces secretly in a mysterious way that the affliction is sent either as punishment for some wrong committed by the ill person or simply that the anvil demands from the stricken person a fitting offering. Usually the kind of offering is indicated, as a white goat with straight horns, or a brown ox with a long tail reaching to the ground, or perhaps money. It is necessary to note that in naming the animals to be offered or the money to be paid, the blacksmith takes into consideration the economic status of the petitioner, and in his choice sacrifical

[38] Machavariani, D., and Bartolomei, A.: 74-83.

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791 animals, he usually selects the best breed known in the community. 326 If after consultation with the blacksmith and presentation of the offering the sick man recovers, the result is fame and new presents and offerings to the blacksmith and his anvil; but in the event the man dies, the explanation is that the relatives of the sick person did not know how to appease the anvil, or they did not apply to the right blacksmith's shop and anvil, as it should have been, etc. These superstitious beliefs of the people give to the blacksmiths, besides the profits mentioned, a further advantage in that they may keep the doors of their homes and shops wide open during the day or night without fear of having their property stolen, despite the fact that the people are not very strict in the proper interpretation of the words "mine" and "thine."

[170] Beliefs similar to those just described concerning the supernatural power of iron are found among other peoples of the Caucasus. For example, the Circassians have a special deity, the protector of blacksmiths, called *Tliebse,* about whom M. Taitbout de Marigny[39] relates that "le jour de sa fete, on fait, en son honneur, des libations sur un soc et une hache. . . ."

783 843 372 Besides using iron as a protective power against evil creatures, the people use fire also. Thus the Georgians of Imerethi[40] believe that the evil being of the woods, called *chinka,* is afraid of the fire. In the evening, no one is permitted to enter the room of a pregnant woman without previously warming himself before the fire in the fire-place. If one neglects to take this precaution, the evil spirit may follow the newcomer into the room and drive the woman mad.

Among the Georgians of Meskhethi,[41] if a traveler comes at night into a house where there is a woman with child, he must first cleanse himself of the evil spirit (*avi suli*) who may otherwise enter the room with him. In order to avoid this danger and to cleanse the traveler, he is required to jump over a burning pile and allow himself to be sprinkled with holy water.

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[39] Taitbout de Marigny: b, 309.
[40] Mashurko: 369.
[41] Khakhanov: b, 11.